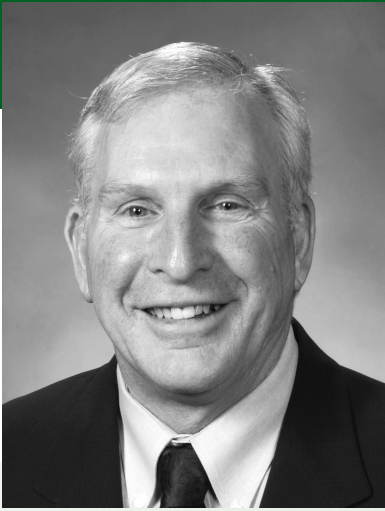


■ REPRESENTATIVE

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■ 2008 Session Preview

Dear neighbors,

My focus as a lawmaker is protecting your families from crime and emergencies.

As chair of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, I'm constantly working with police, firefighters and others on how to make your neighborhood safer.

This newsletter isn't big enough to cover everything. During the 2008 session, we'll debate thousands of pieces of legislation along with changes to our state's budget.

I'd like to talk about two hot topics in this newsletter:

Sex offenders – This is a horrible crime that's tough to prosecute. I'm working with prosecutors, police and the governor's office on better ways to catch and convict sex offenders, and to prevent those who've served their time from re-offending.

Disasters and emergencies – Our state just suffered one of the worst storms in our history, with hurricane-like winds on the coast, power outages and flooding that shut down I-5 for a week. We can't prevent Mother Nature from causing earthquakes or storms; what we can change is how we respond to disasters.

If you have any questions, comments or ideas, please shoot me an e-mail. Some of the best ideas come from everyday citizens, and I try to respond to everything you send, even during the busiest days of session.

Thank you again for taking the time to read this newsletter. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Rep. Al O'Brien

D-Mountlake Terrace

State Representative, 1st Legislative District

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REPRESENTATIVE
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Protecting your family

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Protecting your family



Sex offenders

Washington state has some of the nation's toughest laws against sex offenders. But that doesn't mean our job is done. There are sex offenders convicted long ago who are just now getting out of prison, and the tough laws we passed two years ago don't apply to them.

This year, Gov. Chris Gregoire asked a team of prosecutors, police officers and victim advocates to look at our laws and safeguards to see what we could do better.

I'm working with prosecutors, police and the governor's office to put some of those recommendations into law. Some of those ideas include:

Better DNA testing – Sex crimes are tough to prove, because it's usually done behind closed doors, with no witnesses. DNA evidence is the strongest proof we have to put sex offenders away. I'm working on legislation to improve our DNA collection and turn that evidence into convictions so we can get more of these criminals off the street.



Better tracking of released sex offenders – Too many sex offenders are registering "homeless" as their address to get around the requirement that they inform local police where they're living.

Better enforcement – In late 2007, we started using state money to fund a crack-down on sex offenders with violations or outstanding warrants. Local police officers and sheriff deputies worked with US Marshalls to find these sex offenders. This was a temporary project funded by a small fund that the governor can tap. Police chiefs and sheriffs would love to do this year-round, but they don't have the budget for it. I'm looking at ways to fund local law enforcement so no neighborhood becomes a secret safe haven for sex offenders avoiding our laws.



Protecting your family from disasters

Mother Nature surprised us again. Newspapers are calling this storm the Disaster in December — this was historic, the worst storm in memory.



I-5 was under ten feet of water, winds knocked over trees all over the west side and floods caused problems from Centralia to Woodinville.

You can't predict the next disaster. It could be an earthquake, a massive forest fire or an eruption of Mt. Rainier. What we can do is prepare for the next one.



Every family needs a three-day kit – Tens of thousands of people lost power for up to a week during the December storm. Others were stranded by floods and unpassable roads, and many people couldn't drink their water without boiling it first ... and it's a bit hard to boil water without power.

If a disaster hits, your family needs to be able to survive for at least three days.

Please spend an hour a month working on your family's survival kit and emergency plan. Add one thing to the kit – drinking water or food – and talk to your family about what to do and where to meet if you can't get back home. Cell phones and telephones network often get overwhelmed and fail during emergencies.

For more information:
www.govlink.org/3days3ways

A rallying point for your neighborhood – The experience of people in Chehalis and Grays Harbor shows that each neighborhood needs a central place to come together during a disaster. Schools are a natural choice. Everybody knows where their local schools are, and your children – if they're cut off from you – know it's a safe place. This is why I've championed the idea of making our schools a rallying point and stocking them with survival supplies.